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SOVIETS STILL IN FULL CONTROL OF GDR URANIUM MININGSueddeutsche Zeitung
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Berlin -- Contrary to official GDR announcements that the Soviet Wismut Corporation, which conducts the uranium-mining operations in the Erzgebirge, was to be converted into a joint German-Soviet corporation, with German personnel in its key posts after 1 January 1954, the huge enterprise is still completely under Soviet control. The much-publicized conversion never took place. This is averred by several members of SED (Socialist Unity Party) Kreis headquarters who have fled to West Berlin. The mixed Soviet-German corporation, with 50 percent of the shares held by the Soviet government and the other 50 percent held by the GDR government, exists only on paper. Fritz Selbmann, the GDR Minister of Heavy Industry, has become the director of the Wismut Corporation, but he has no influence at all. The Soviet directors, who are controlled by the CPSU, still hold all the power.

At the beginning of January 1954, the Central Committee of the SED issued orders to the 11 Kreis headquarters of the party in the region in which Wismut operates to compile lists of "reliable" Germans who were to take over certain production and administrative posts of Wismut, until then occupied by Soviets. These posts, however, were only on the intermediate level, such as shaft manager, personnel chief, chief mechanic, and billeting officer. The Kreis headquarters were informed in March, however, that top authorities had decided against replacing the Soviet personnel with Germans. It is reported that the original decision was countermanded on direct orders from Moscow.

Thus, the Wismut Corporation, contrary to the original announcements, is still completely under Soviet control. Several thousand Soviets are employed at all levels of the technical and administrative hierarchy. This Soviet personnel is under strict supervision by special organizations of the CPSU. Every Wismut installation has a Soviet "Inform Department," which is the opposite number of the SED Party Headquarters and which is responsible for communicating the Soviet orders to the SED Kreis headquarters. The Inform Department also has liaison officers to the GDR Trade Union Federation and to the FDJ (Free German Youth). Both the SED Kreis headquarters and the Soviet plant managers depend to a large degree on the approval of their orders by these Inform Departments. This system ensures that the Wismut Corporation remains a typically Soviet province within the GDR, with special laws and regulations.

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